

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION WEED-FREE FORAGE PRODUCTS REQUIREMENTS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q. What is meant by the term “Weed Free Forage Products”?**

- A. Weed free forage products are crops or crop products that have been inspected according to standards used by the North American Weed Management Association and member states. Fields are inspected to ensure the absence of seed from 54 noxious weed species. Fields which pass the inspection are certified, and the producer may then label the products as a weed-free forage product.

**Q. Who conducts the inspections, and how is certified hay labeled?**

- A. Hay or straw is inspected in the field of origin by trained, certified inspectors. Inspectors check the fields of participating forage producers, within ten days prior to harvest. Standing crops found to be free of the listed noxious weed seed are then harvested and marked with the legal certification labeling of the state or county. Examples of certification labels include:

Colorado	twine with orange and blue twisted fibers or galvanized wire
Kansas	orange bale tags
Nebraska	orange bale tags
South Dakota	orange bale tags
Wyoming	twine with orange and blue twisted fibers, or orange bale tags or galvanized wire

**Q. Why is it necessary for the Forest Service to require the use of certified forage products on National Forests and National Grasslands?**

- A. Forage products sometimes contain seed from non-native weeds. Resulting weed populations degrade the health of our native ecosystems. Wildlife habitat, aesthetic values and economic values decline as a result. The best known method for minimizing the spread of these plants via hay, straw, grain and other products, is the adoption and enforcement of rules requiring the use of certified weed-free forage products.

**Q. Why is it necessary for the Forest Service to impose restrictions on the use of forage products?**

- A. Forage products often contain seed from non-native, invasive plants, also known as noxious weeds. Resulting plant populations degrade the health of our native ecosystems. Wildlife habitat, aesthetic and economic values decline as a result. By imposing this restriction, the Forest Service will minimize the spread of noxious weeds and avoid the impacts associated with them.

**Q. Exactly what types of forage products are mentioned in this closure order?**

- A. The closure order deals with the use of hay, hay cubes, straw, grain, and pellets.

**Q. Are livestock feeds the only products which are subject to the closure order?**

- A. While hay, straw and similar products are most often associated with livestock feeding, they are also used as mulch for erosion control, bedding, and other uses. The closure requires that all hay, hay cubes, straw, and grain, regardless of how they are used, be certified as weed free, when used or stored on National Forests and National Grasslands.

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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**Q. Does the closure apply to me if I am simply passing through National Forests or National Grasslands?**

- A. No. The closure does not pertain to forage products in transport across National Forests or National Grasslands, if not unloaded or otherwise used or stored on those lands.

**Q. Am I required to buy certified forage products from the same state in which the National Forests or National Grassland I intend to visit is located?**

- A. All states in the Rocky Mountain Region (Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming) have acceptable certification programs with similar weed lists and certification standards. Products certified in any of these states, and bearing the appropriate labeling or twine, qualify as certified forage products in any of the National Forests or National Grasslands within the Rocky Mountain Region. No forage products coming from States without a certification program can be used on National Forests or National Grasslands in the Region.

**Q. Does certification of a forage product guarantee that no noxious weeds will be found in the product?**

- A. No. Certification is simply the most feasible way to minimize the risk of viable noxious weed seed being transported within the forage to National Forests and National Grasslands, or other areas. When the field is inspected, they are inspected for noxious weeds which presently contain, or could within the next ten days produce, viable seed. Weed leaves and stems may occur in certified products, but the intent is to minimize the risk of *seed* transport.

**Q. Do certified forage products cost more than uncertified products?**

- A. The cost of certified products is generally 25-30% higher; the price varies with location.

**Q. Why is it allowable to use feed pellets, while non-certified hay cubes are prohibited?**

- A. Feed pellets are made by finely grinding the hay, heat treating it, and then compressing into pellets. This process kills a very high percentage of viable seed that may be in the source hay. While it may not in all cases eliminate all weed seed, pellets are considered a reasonable option for preventing noxious weed spread to National Forests and National Grasslands in the Region.

**Q. Is there such thing as certified hay cubes?**

- A. Yes. Some states, including Colorado, have developed a process and a market for the development of certified hay cubes. These cubes are made from certified hay that is traceable back to the field of origin, where the inspection occurred. Certified hay cubes are sold in bags which have sewn-in tags, designating the cubes as certified. If no tag exists on the bag, cubes cannot be considered certified.

**Q. For which species are fields and products inspected to achieve certification?**

- A. The North American Weed Free Forage standard, referred to in the closure order, specifies a checklist of fifty-four (54) species, for which fields are checked within ten days prior to harvest.

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**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**  
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**Q. Where do I find certified forage products?**

- A. If you live in a state with a certification program, contact your nearest feed dealer. If you cannot locate a dealer of certified products, contact your State Department of Agriculture to find a list of growers and producers who sell certified products. Within the Rocky Mountain Region, these numbers are:

Colorado	(303) 239-4142
Wyoming	(307) 777-6585
South Dakota	(605) 773-3796
Nebraska	(402) 471-2394
Kansas	(785) 862-2180

Other States having a certification program include Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Alaska, Arizona, Minnesota, and Wisconsin; Alberta, Canada also has a certification program. If you live outside the region, you may contact the local ranger district office; they maintain lists of local producers and feed stores with certified products.

**Q. How can a producer get their crops certified, or get information about the state's certification program?**

- A. If your state has a program, you may phone the State Department of Agriculture (numbers above) to learn how to become a participant in the program.

**Q. Are there penalties for violation of these closure orders, and how will the orders be enforced?**

- A. Yes there are penalties for violation under the statutes listed on the closure order. Violations of the closure order are punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual, \$10,000 for an organization, and imprisonment of not more than six (6) months. [Title 16 USC 551, Title 18 USC 3571, and Title 18 USC 3581 (b) (7)].